Liberty of Conſcience ASSERTED,

And SEVERAL

REASONS RENDRED,

Why no Outward Force, nor Impoſition, ought to be uſed in Matters of *Faith* and *Religion*:

With ſeveral SAYINGS, Collected from the Speeches and Writings of KING *JAMES*, And KING *CHARLES* the Firſt.

John Crook } } *Francis Howgill*
Samuel Fiſher } } *Richard Hubberthorne.*

Acts 5. 38, 39.

Now I ſay unto you, Refrain from theſe men, and let them alone: for if this Counſel, or this Work, be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it; leſt haply ye be found fighters againſt God.

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Liberty of Conſcience Aſſerted, &c.

LIBERTY of CONSCIENCE ought to be allowed in the dayes of the *Goſpel* in the free Exerciſe of it to *God-ward* (without Compulſion) in all things relating to His Worſhip, for theſe Reaſons following.

1. Becauſe the *General* and *Univerſal* Royal *Law* of *Chriſt* Commands it *Matth.*7. 12. *All things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them: for this is the Law and Prophets.* That which every man would have and receive from another, he ought by Chriſt's Rule to give and allow it to another. But every man is willing to have the *Liberty* of his *own Conſcience*, Therefore ought to *allow it* to another.

2. Becauſe, *No man* can *perſwade* the *Conſcience* of *another*, either what *God is*, or how he ſhould *be worſhipped*, but by the Spirit, which God hath given to inſtruct man in the wayes of Truth.

3. Becauſe, *All Obedience* or *Service* that is obtained *by force*, is for fear of *Wrath*, and not from *Love*, nor for *Conſcience ſake*; and therefore will but continue ſo long as that *fear* or *force* abides upon them.

4. Becauſe, That *by forcing*, No man can make a *Hypocrite* to be *a true Believer*; but on the contrary, many may be made *Hypocrites*.

5. Becauſe, That in all *forced Impoſitions* upon *mens Conſciences* there is ſomething of the *Wrath* of man *exerciſed*, which works not the *Righteouſneſs of God*, but rather begets *Enmity* in the heart *one* towards *another*.

6. Becauſe, that by *forcing* any thing upon *mens Conſciences*, as to matters of *Faith* and *Worſhip*, many are *hardened* in their *hearts* againſt the *things impoſed*; when as otherwiſe, through *Love* and *gentle Inſtructions* their hearts might be *perſwaded* to *willing Obedience*.

7. Becauſe, that *Perſecution* for *Conſcience* contradicteth *Chriſt's Charge*, Matth. 13. who bids that *the Tares* (or falſe *worſhippers*) be *ſuffered* to *grow together* in the *Field* (or *World*) till the *harveſt* (or End of the World.)

8. Becauſe, *Force* is contrary to *the end* for which it is *pretended* to be uſed (*viz.*) *the preſervation and ſafety of the Wheat*, which *End* is not *anſwered* by *Perſecution*, becauſe the *Wheat* is in danger to be *plucked up* thereby, as Chriſt ſaith.

9. Becauſe, *to force*, is inconſiſtent with the *belief* of the *Jews Converſion* (and other *falſe worſhippers*) which is prayed for by the *Publick Teachers*, and cannot be attained, if *Perſecution* for *Conſcience* be *proſecuted*.

10. Becauſe, they that *impoſe* upon *mens Conſciences*, exerciſe *Dominion* over *mens Faith*, which the Apoſtles denyed, ſaying, *they had not Dominion over any mens Faith*.

11. Becauſe, *Impoſition* upon *mens Conſciences* neceſſitates them *to ſin*, in yeelding a *Conformity* contrary to their own faith: *for whatſoever is not of a mans own faith, is ſin*.

12. Becauſe, that *Impoſition* and *force* wreſtles with *fleſh* and *blood*, and *Carnal weapons*, which is contrary to the Apoſtles Doctrine, who ſaid, *Our weapons are not Carnal, but Spiritual, and mighty through God*: and *we wreſtle not with fleſh and blood*.

13. Becauſe, there is but **one Judge, Law-giver** and **King** in and over the *Conſcience*, as the Saints have teſtified in the Scriptures of Truth; and whoſoever would *intrude*, ſo as to be *Judge* and *Law-giver* over the Conſcience, *intrencheth* upon the *Prerogative* of Chriſt, *Iſa.* 33. 22. *James* 4. 12.

14. Becauſe, it is propheſied in *Iſa.* 11. *The Wolf ſhall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard ſhall lye down with the Kid, and there ſhall be no Deſtroyer in all the Holy Mountain*; and therefore no *Impoſition* upon mens Conſciences.

15. Becauſe, to *impoſe* upon *mens Conſciences* for *differences* in *Faith*, is contrary to the *Advice* of the *Apoſtle*, who directs People *to wait upon God to be ſatisfied*, and not to the *Magiſtrate* or *others*, to be *forced*; who ſaith, *Whereunto we have attained, let us walk*; *and wherein any man is otherwiſe minded, God ſhall reveal, even that unto him*.

16. Becauſe,

16. Because, *to force* mens *Consciences*, and to lay *Yoaks* upon them, is to *make void* the *Blood-shed* and *Sufferings* of Christ, who sits upon the *Throne* of the *Conscience*, and gives *liberty* there; and commands us to *stand fast in that Liberty*, and *not to be entangled through the Impositions of men*, or *Yoak of bondage*, Gal. 5. 6.

17. Because in *all Nations* the *different Professions* and *Perswasions* of *Religion*, are either *Friends* or *Enemies* to the *Governors*: If *Friends* then *obliged* by that *Bond*. If *Enemies* then *Christ's Command* is to take place, who saith, *Love your Enemies*, which if observed, *Persecution* for *Conscience* will be avoided.

18. Because, *Tolleration* of *different Perswasions* in *Religion* was *allowed* in the *Jewish State*, as not *Inconsistent* with *their Safety*, and that in *things* contrary *each* to *other*, as the *Sadducees*, *Pharisees*, *Essæans*, *Herodians* with *Others*.

19. Because, the *True Religion* cannot be *Preached* up by *force* of *Armes*, and the *Primitive Christians* detested that Form of *Proceedings*.

20. Because, No man hath *such Power* over the *Souls* and *Consciences* of other men, as to lay a *Necessity* on them *to Believe* that which they do *not Believe*, or not *to Believe* what they *do Believe*; True Faith being the Gift of God.

21. Because, If the *Magistrate Imposeth* upon the *Conscience*, he must either do it as a *Magistrate*, or as a *Christian*. Not as a *Magistrate*, for then *Heathens* (being *Magistrates*) have the *same Power* to *Impose*; and so, by *Revolutions* and *Conquests*, may come to *give Laws* to *Christians*, and *Compel* them to *Idolatry*. 2. Not as *Christians* for that *Contradicts* Christ's saying, *The Kings of the Gentiles exercise Lordship over them; but it shall not be so among you, for all ye are Brethren.*

22. Because, By the *same Rule* and *Reason* that the *Magistrates* of *one Nation* ought to *Impose* upon, and *Persecute* for *Conscience*, the *Magistrates* in *all* other *Nations* ought to do the *same*; and so the *greatest part* of *Mankind* may come to be *Destroyed*, there being more that *Dissent*, than are at *Unity* in Matters of *Faith* and *Religion*.

23. Because, The *Strength* of *Truth*, and its *Conquest* over *Falsity* and *Deceit*, is best *Discovered* by letting *both* have *their Liberty*,

Liberty, from *outward Compulsion*; For no doubt had *outward Force* been *less used*, the *prevalency* of *Truth* had been *more manifest*, and that wise saying, truly experienced in the World, *Viz. That which is of God will stand, and that which is not will come to nothing.*

24. Because, The *Disciples* of *Christ* are rebuked by him for *desiring* the *Destruction* of *those* that were *contrary* to *Him*, and would not *receive Him* : which Zeal is sharply reproved in His saying, *They knew not what Spirit they were of.*

25. Because, To *Impose* upon *mens Consciences*, and to *Destroy* their *Persons* for *Difference* in *Religion*, is *Contrary* to the *End* of *Christ's Coming*, who saith, *He came not to* **Destroy** *mens* Lives, *but to* **save** *them.*

26. Because, *People* of *divers Religions* in one Nation, *if not tolerated*, must some of them be *destroyed*, or *removed* by *Banishment*. If *destroyed*, the *Constancy* and *Patience* of the *Sufferers* for their *Faith*, moving *Pity* and *Commiseration*, makes men *more ready to own*, than to *reject* their *Faith*, and so rather *Multiplies*, than *lessens*, the *number* of its *Professors*. If *Banish'd*, this renders the *Banished* as so many *Enemies abroad*, ready upon *all occasions* to *disturbe* the *Peace* and *Tranquillity* of their *own native Country*. There is therefore, in order to the outward *welfare* of all *Nations*, a kind of *Necessity* for a *Toleration* in them of all *Religions*.

27. Because, To *Impose* upon *mens Consciences* begets a *hatred* against the *Imposers* in those who are *Imposed upon*, and *forc'd* thereby to *violate* their *Consciences* towards God in matters of Worship.

28. Because, Men are *Commanded* to be *subject* to the Powers that are, for *Conscince sake*, and therefore such Powers ought not to *Persecute* men for *Conscience sake*, being that is prescribed for the rule of Obedience; The Scripture saying, *Be ye subject not onely for wrath, but for Conscience sake.*

29. We find it Asserted by King *James* in his speech to the *Parliament* in the Year, 1609. who said, *That it is a pure rule in Divinity, That God never loves to plant his Church with* **Violence** *and* **Blood**; and furthermore said, *It was usually the condition of Christians to be* **Persecuted**, *but not to* **Persecute.**

30. And

30. And we find the *same things* in substance asserted again, by his *Son* **Charles the First**, in his Book known by the Name of EIKΩN BAΣIΛIKH, Printed for *R. Royston*, as followeth.

Page 67. In his Prayer to God, he said, *Thou seest how much* **Cruelty** *amongst Christians is acted, under the colour of Religion; as if we could not be Christians, unless we Crucifie one another.*

Pag. 28. *Make them at length seriously to consider, that nothing* **Violent** *and* **Injurious**, *can be Religious.*

Pag. 70. *Nor is it so proper to hew out Religious Reformations by the* **Sword**, *as to polish them by* **fair** *and* **equal Disputations**, *among those that are most concerned in the Differences, whom, not Force, but Reason ought to convince.*

Sure in matters of Religion, those Truths gain most upon mens Judgements and Consciences, which are **least urged with Secular Violence**, *which weakens Truth with Prejudices.*

Pag. 115. *It being an Office not onely of Humanity, rather to use* **Reason** *than* **Force**, *but also of Christianity to seek* **Peace** *and ensue it.*

Pag. 91, 92. *In point of true Conscientious* **tenderness**, *I have often Declared, how little I desire my Laws and Scepter, should intrench* **on God's Soveraignty**, *which is the* **onely King of mens Consciences.**

Pag. 123. *Nor do I desire any man should be farther subject unto me, than all of us may be subject unto God.*

Concerning Oaths.

P. 76. *The Inioyning of* **Oathes**, *upon People, must needs in things doubtful* **be Dangerous**, *as in things unlawful* **Damnable.**

Some words of Advice from *CHARLES* the First, to the then Prince of *Walls*, now King of *England*, &c.

Pag. 165. *My Counsel and Charge to you is, That you seriously consider the former Real or Objected Miscariages, which might occasion my Troubles, that you may avoid them,* &c.

Beware of **Exasperating** *any Factions, by the* **Crosness** *and Asperity of some mens* **Passions, Humors**, *and* **private Opinions**,

Imployed

Imployed by you, grounded onely upon differences in leſſer matters, which are but the Skirts and Suburbs of Religion, wherein a Charitable **Connivance**, *and Chriſtian* **Toleration**, *often Diſſipates their ſtrength, when rougher Oppoſition Fortyfies, and puts the deſpiſed and oppreſſed party into ſuch Combinations, as may moſt enable them to get a full Revenge on thoſe they count their Perſecutors.*

Pag. 166. *Take heed that outward Circumſtances and Formalities of Religion Devour not all.*

Pag. 164. *Your Prerogative is beſt ſhewed and exerciſed in* **Remitting**, *rather than* **Exacting** *the Rigor of the Laws, there being nothing worſe than* **Legal Tyranny**.

Acts 5. 33, 34, 35. Gamaliel *ſaid unto them, Ye men of Iſrael, take heed unto your ſelves, what ye intend to do as touching theſe men, &c.*

Acts 18. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. Gallio *ſaid, If it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdneſs, Reaſon would that I ſhould bear with you: But if it be a queſtion of words and names, and of your Law, look ye to it: for I will be no Judge of ſuch matters.*

THE END.